

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 5 Sec 1CHICAGO TRIBUNE
8 March 1983

Survey finds big shift on defense

By R.C. Longworth

BY OVERWHELMING majorities, the American public opposes higher defense spending and the use of U.S. troops to halt a leftist triumph in El Salvador, a nationwide poll commissioned by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations said Monday.

It was the third such poll sponsored by the council and the first since 1978, when 32 percent wanted more defense spending, 16 percent wanted less and almost nobody mentioned war or the arms race as a major foreign policy problem.

After two years of the Reagan administration, the new poll showed some sharp differences:

- Twenty-four percent want less weapons spending and 52 percent think present spending is about right. Only 21 percent want more. Sixty-three percent thought the U.S. military was equal to or stronger than the Soviet military. In 1978, 56 percent thought the U.S. was falling behind.

- Thirteen percent cited the nuclear weapons race as a major foreign policy problem and another 11 percent mentioned war, including nuclear war, to make these two issues one of the nation's top worries.

- Eighty percent of the respondents opposed sending troops "if leftist guerrillas are about to defeat the government of El Salvador." Of these, about 11 percent would be willing to send weapons. But 29 percent favored negotiations instead, and 18 percent would do nothing.

But this did not indicate a new isolationism. Sixty-one percent saw a "great threat" in a communist takeover in Mexico, but only 21 percent said a communist triumph in El Salvador would be a "great threat." More than half would send troops if the Soviet Union invades Japan or Western Europe. The poll showed greater U.S. attention to its own back yard and vital interests, coupled with a disinclination to tend the rest of the world.

- About 77 percent favored new Soviet-American weapons control agreements. More than half favored a mutual nuclear weapons freeze, making this position "much more

popular than the Reagan administration's view that there should be a freeze 'only after the U.S. builds up its nuclear weapons more,' " the summary said.

The poll, although commissioned by the council, was carried out by the Gallup Organization, which did 1,547 personal interviews across the nation. Gallup also asked the same questions of 341 "leaders"—in government, business, labor, universities, the media and other groups—to see how this group differed from the general public.

According to council president John E. Rielly, the leaders sided with the administration in only a few areas—such as the need for foreign aid and free trade, both of which remain relatively unpopular among the public.

"In many other areas, including weapons control, defense spending, human rights, cooperation with the

Soviet Union, restrictions on CIA activity and relations with Cuba, leadership sentiment is even less supportive of administration policy than is public opinion," Rielly said.

FOR INSTANCE, 81 percent of the leaders favored diplomatic relations with Cuba, as against only 48 percent of the public; 96 percent favored weapons control agreements with Russia and 79 percent favored a mutual and immediate nuclear freeze; only 77 percent of the public wanted an weapons agreement and 58 percent favored a freeze.

The leaders, who often have most influence over policy, favored economic foreign aid by 94 percent, the elimination of trade barriers by 67 percent, and the dispatch of U.S. troops to defend Western Europe against a Soviet attack by 92 percent. In each case, a much lower percentage of the public favored such moves.